

## Questions and Answers about

# Amebiasis

## (Amebas)

### Q What is amebiasis (amebas)?

A Amebiasis is an infection of the bowel caused by a parasite. Amebas may sometimes spread to the liver or other parts of the body. The infection exists in two forms: 1) As a cyst (egg) and 2) As a fragile *trophozoite*. The infection can be mild or severe. The severe form of amebiasis is called *amebic dysentery*.

### Q How are amebas spread?

A Anyone can get amebas. The disease is more common where people have poor sanitation. Infection with amebas mainly occurs by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. In addition, amebas can occur by putting objects in the mouth that may have been contaminated with ameba cysts. The spread of amebas can also occur sexually by oral-anal contact.

### Q What are the symptoms of amebiasis (amebas)?

A Many people that have amebiasis do not have symptoms. Some of the **mild symptoms** are:

- Loose stool
- Stomach pain and cramping

*Amebic dysentery* is a **severe form** of amebiasis. The symptoms are:

- Stomach pain
- Bloody stool
- Fever
- Frequent stool with mucus
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation

Sometimes the amebas can get into the liver and form an abscess (pocket of pus). In some rare cases amebas can spread to other parts of the body.

### Q Is there treatment for amebiasis?

A Once your health care provider has told you that you have amebiasis, you may have to take medication. Specific treatment will vary from person to person, and may require two drugs, one to kill the cysts and the other to kill the trophozoites.

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## Q How can you prevent amebiasis ?

A People get amebiasis by swallowing the amebic cyst (egg) found in the stool of the infected person. To prevent the infection:

- Wash hands with soap and clean water before making food and before eating.
- Wash hands after using the toilet and changing diapers.
- Dispose of diapers in a safe and sanitary way.
- Wash all vegetables and fruits with clean water before eating.
- Take precaution with food and water when traveling to countries with poor sanitation.
- Practice safer anal and oral-anal sex by using latex condoms or dental dams.

11/01

**Your local Public Health Center is:**

